

Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition

Public Health Issue

Food Access

Project Description

Fresh Stop Markets (FSM) bring fresh, local produce at affordable prices to low income neighborhoods and churches while developing leadership among community members. FSM are USDA certified farmers' markets that increase access to affordable local produce in food-insecure neighborhoods. FSM volunteers purchase produce wholesale directly from local farmers who deliver to the market on a regular schedule so community members can pick it up. All produce is divided evenly among market participants who each receive 10-12 items in their share. The markets are driven by cooperative economics, where shares are subsidized based on a sliding scale: Shoppers on WIC pay \$6 per share, those with fixed or limited incomes (including SNAP) pay \$12 and all others pay \$25. Participants can pay with cash, credit/debit, or SNAP EBT. Both Lexington FSMs are participants in the Bluegrass Double Dollars incentive program where all SNAP participants receive an additional free share for every share they purchase. Funds from Kentucky Department for Public Health were used to hire a community liaison who engaged shareholders (neighborhood market participants) in the decision-making process, and facilitated communication with farmers. Specific actions included: chef sampling, community organizing and outreach, food justice workshops, community and farmer forecasting and the FSM Training Institute for community leaders.

Target Population

Food insecure families and limited resource residents (including but not limited to families enrolled in WIC, SNAP, Senior Nutrition Assistance) in the Castlewood and East End neighborhoods of Lexington.

Key Partners

The Lyric Theatre is an historic African-American cultural center in one of the communities where FSM operates. This site has served as a space where community members already feel welcome and theater staff have been supportive of the cooperative food organizing that FSM does. Staff purchased produce from the market, advertised about the market through their existing networks, and provided facility space for market setup.

William Wells Brown Community Center promoted the market through its communication channels (email, fliers, fitness classes, afterschool programs). The center also served as a gathering space for meetings within one of the communities where FSM operates.

The New Beginnings Church of God in Christ provides volunteer leaders who run one of the FSM. They also serve as a site for that market in the neighborhood.

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Impact/Accomplishment

Through all combined efforts, it is estimated that approximately 300 individuals were reached.

- **Chef Sampling:** 40-50 weekly attendees over 10 weeks (about 200 distinct families)
- **Community Outreach, Recruitment and Training:** Flyers, Facebook, Door to Door, Power Mapping Exercises to recruit new leaders and volunteers (25 new participants)
- **Food Justice Workshops:** 50 attendees

Challenges/Lessons Learned

Go to the gathering spaces of communities most impacted by the public health issue (whatever issue it may be) and learn from their concerns, even if those are not related to the particular problem that you have in mind. Don't show up to present your planning process or even to begin a formal data/survey gathering process. Show up at first to listen to the communities themselves, learn about them apart from the planning and your particular agenda. Keep showing up regularly in those spaces to listen, learn, build trust, increase transparency, and to include these communities at EVERY LEVEL of the planning, decision-making, and implementation processes. You will gradually be able to present your ideas and opportunities and process for planning, but you shouldn't lead with it. Be patient!

Next Steps

Many volunteers have requested increased democratic participation in decision making around market planning, skills development, and future strategic direction. We are now hosting monthly business meetings to create and implement participatory planning processes. Through the 2017-2018 CHAT grant, we are beginning the process of working with another neighborhood interested in starting their own FSM and expanding the opportunities for FSM in Lexington.

Contact Information

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